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**Testimony of David Sutherland – Director of Government Relations  
Before the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee – March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

**In Opposition to Section 29 of Bill 946, which would eliminate funding for  
the Community Investment Act**

On behalf of The Nature Conservancy, I would like to express our strong opposition to the Governor's proposal in Bill 946 to reduce by half in 2016 and then eliminate in 2017 funding for the Community Investment Act (CIA) by diverting the dedicated revenues that come into the program into the General Fund.

The CIA is not funded by taxes, but by fees that property owners pay with the understanding that the revenues generated by it go towards protecting those crucial resources that are most often affected by real estate activity.

**The programs funded by the CIA create on-the-ground jobs and the type of communities that attract businesses and residents.** In the past ten years, the CIA has become a critical component of the state's efforts to protect the resources that are essential to the health, vitality, and economic well-being of our communities. It has funded over 626 projects in 157 towns, which have provided matching funds for all of the projects. Our latest figures indicate that communities have provided almost a one to one match on average for all the projects. The CIA also funds staff positions at the state agencies to administer these programs.

At least twenty six of our thirty two Distressed and Targeted Investment municipalities have already received grants, many multiple grants, from the CIA.

Connecticut has made progress on open space conservation in the past decade, but we still rank far behind our neighboring states in the amount of state-owned parks and forests we provide for our citizens. The grants provided by the CIA enable communities to protect lands that meet stringent state criteria and in almost every case, provide public access, without burdening DEEP staff with additional management responsibilities.

We've just started to make progress in slowing the fastest loss of farmland in the nation. The continuing stall in the real estate market has given our communities important opportunities to protect prime parkland and farmland at favorable prices, but they need help to pursue these projects.

Please do not divert the dedicated funding from the Community Investment Act.